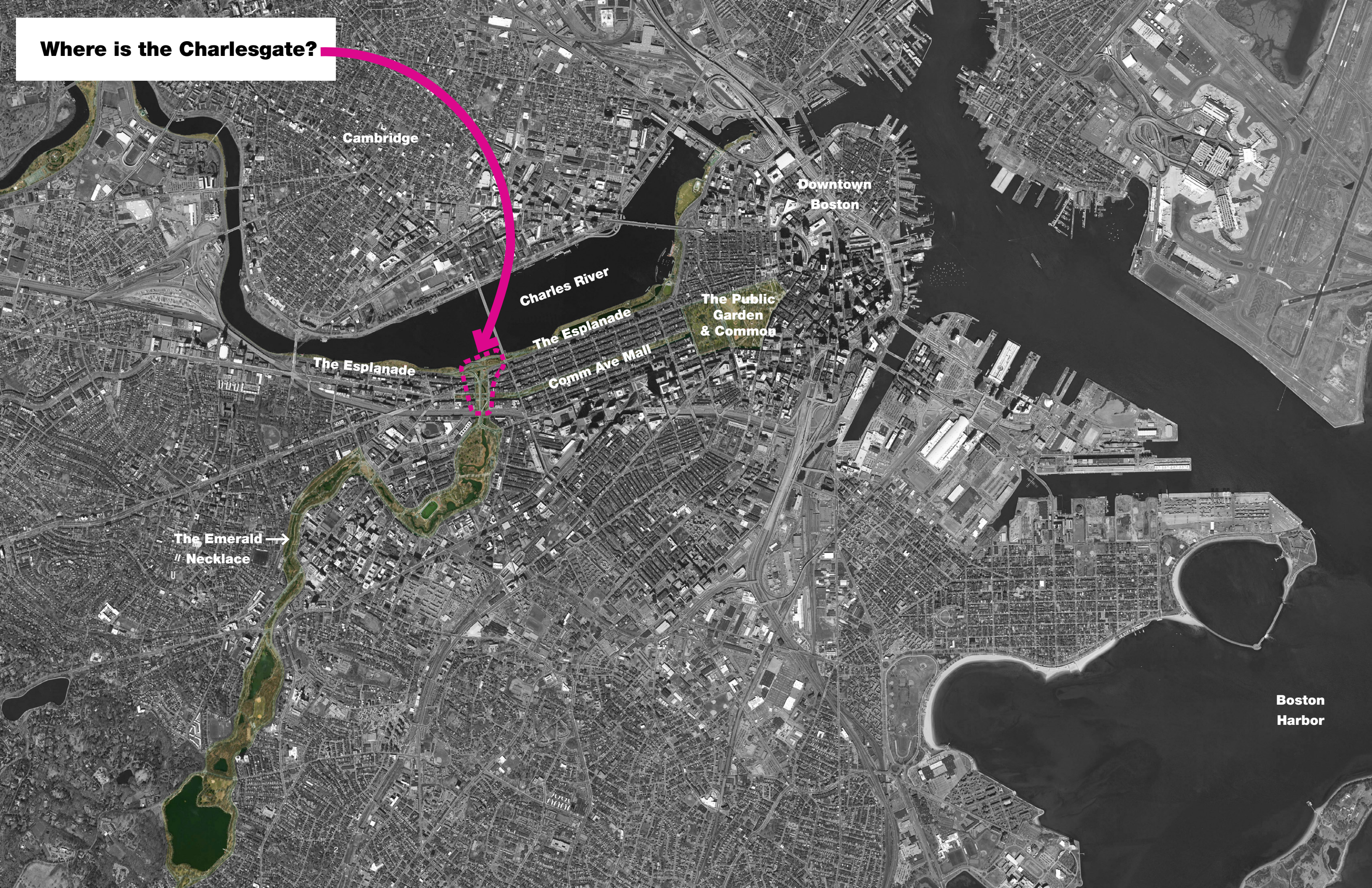


The Charlesgate

A Community-Led Vision for Boston's Critical Link



Where is the Charlesgate?



Cambridge

Downtown
Boston

Charles River

The Public
Garden
& Common

The Esplanade

The Esplanade

Comm Ave Mall

The Emerald →
// Necklace

Boston
Harbor

Why is the Charlesgate so important?

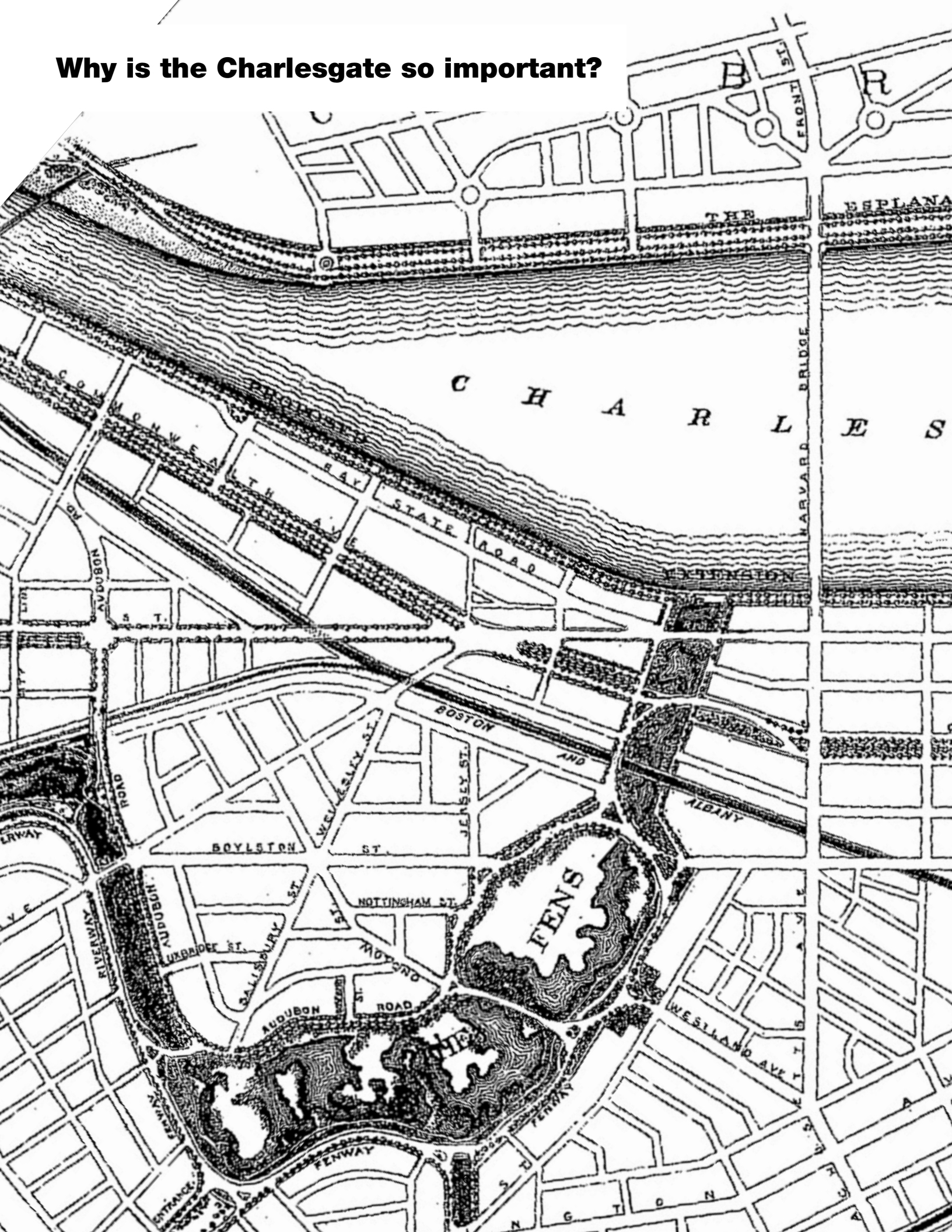
The Charlesgate is the **critical link** between Boston's major park systems:

- The Emerald Necklace
- The Commonwealth Avenue Mall
- The Charles River Esplanade



New Boston and Charles River Basin, as proposed by Charles Davenport and drawn by Albert Coolidge (1875)

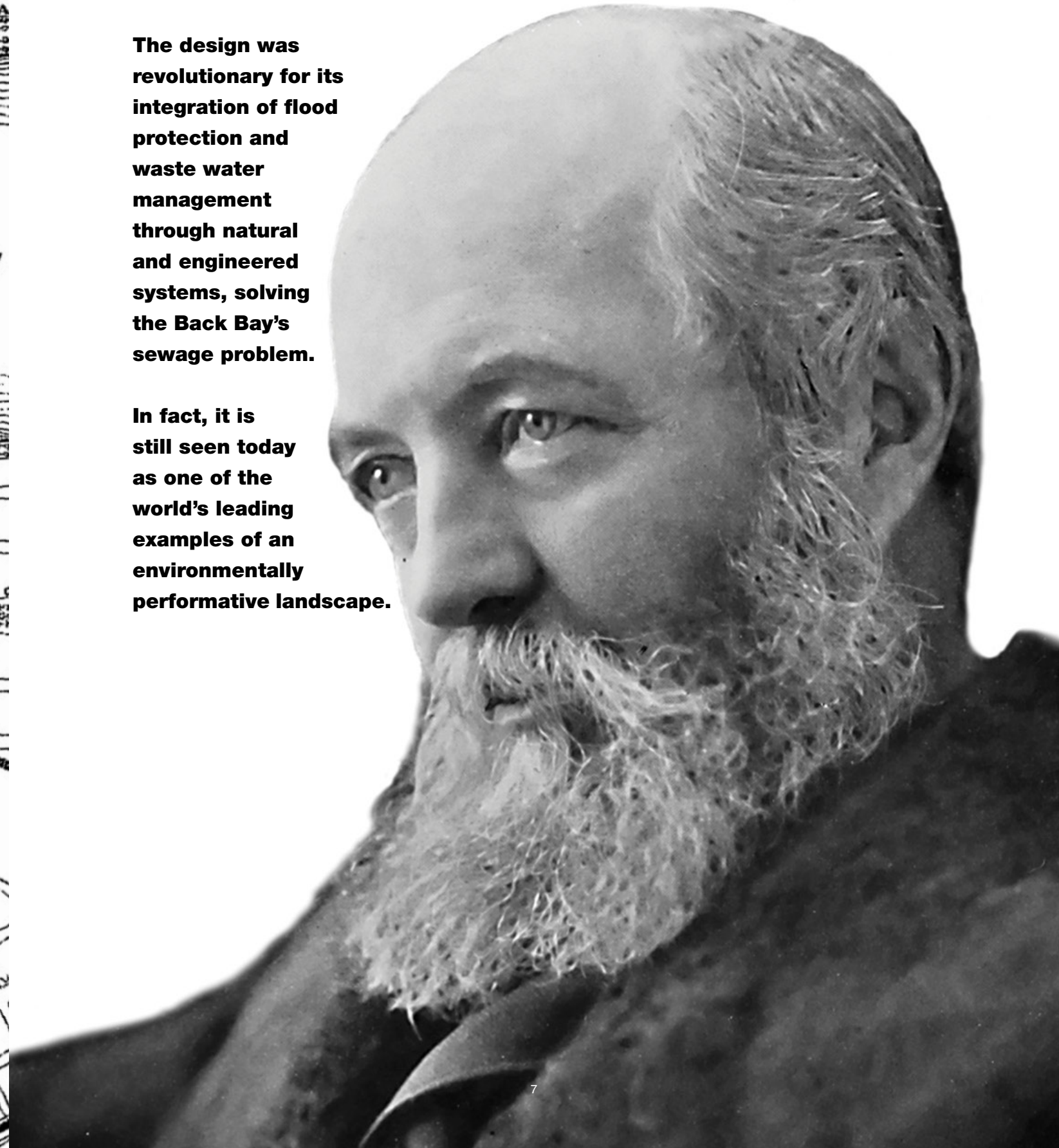
Why is the Charlesgate so important?



In 1878 Frederick Law Olmsted designed Charlesgate as the Beacon Street Entrance to the Back Bay Fens.

The design was revolutionary for its integration of flood protection and waste water management through natural and engineered systems, solving the Back Bay's sewage problem.

In fact, it is still seen today as one of the world's leading examples of an environmentally performative landscape.



In the early 20th century, the Charlesgate neighborhood looked like this...



The area had become one of the most desirable neighborhoods in Boston.



Hotel Braemore 466 Commonwealth Ave., at Charlesgate West — Boston, Mass.



The Problem

Until the roadway construction projects of the 1950s and 60s...



Starting with Storrow Drive that disconnected Charlesgate from the Charles River...

To the construction of the Bowker Overpass in the 1960s, which brought an elevated roadway through the middle of the Charlesgate and dramatically reduced the size of the Muddy River.

The Problem



← untreated drainage from Bowker

storm water from street

armored shore

bottles, debris in the water

duckweed bloom = pollution indicator

Today, the area is plagued by water quality problems and neglect.

For instance, here we see:

A duckweed bloom indicating nutrient pollution in the water,

Solid waste on the water sheet - bottles, cans, plastic wrappers,

A paved edge to the River, preventing plant filtration of storm water and habitat,

The Bowker Overpass draining directly into the Muddy River without any treatment, contributing sediments and heavy metals to the waterway.

The Problem

There is evidence of neglect and disrepair throughout...



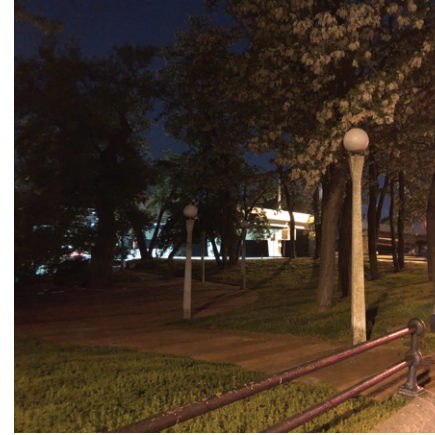
graffiti



broken brick paving



graffiti



burned out lighting



peeling paint



graffiti



graffiti



graffiti



broken brick paving



graffiti



graffiti



graffiti



debris



graffiti



missing lamp



graffiti



broken brick paving

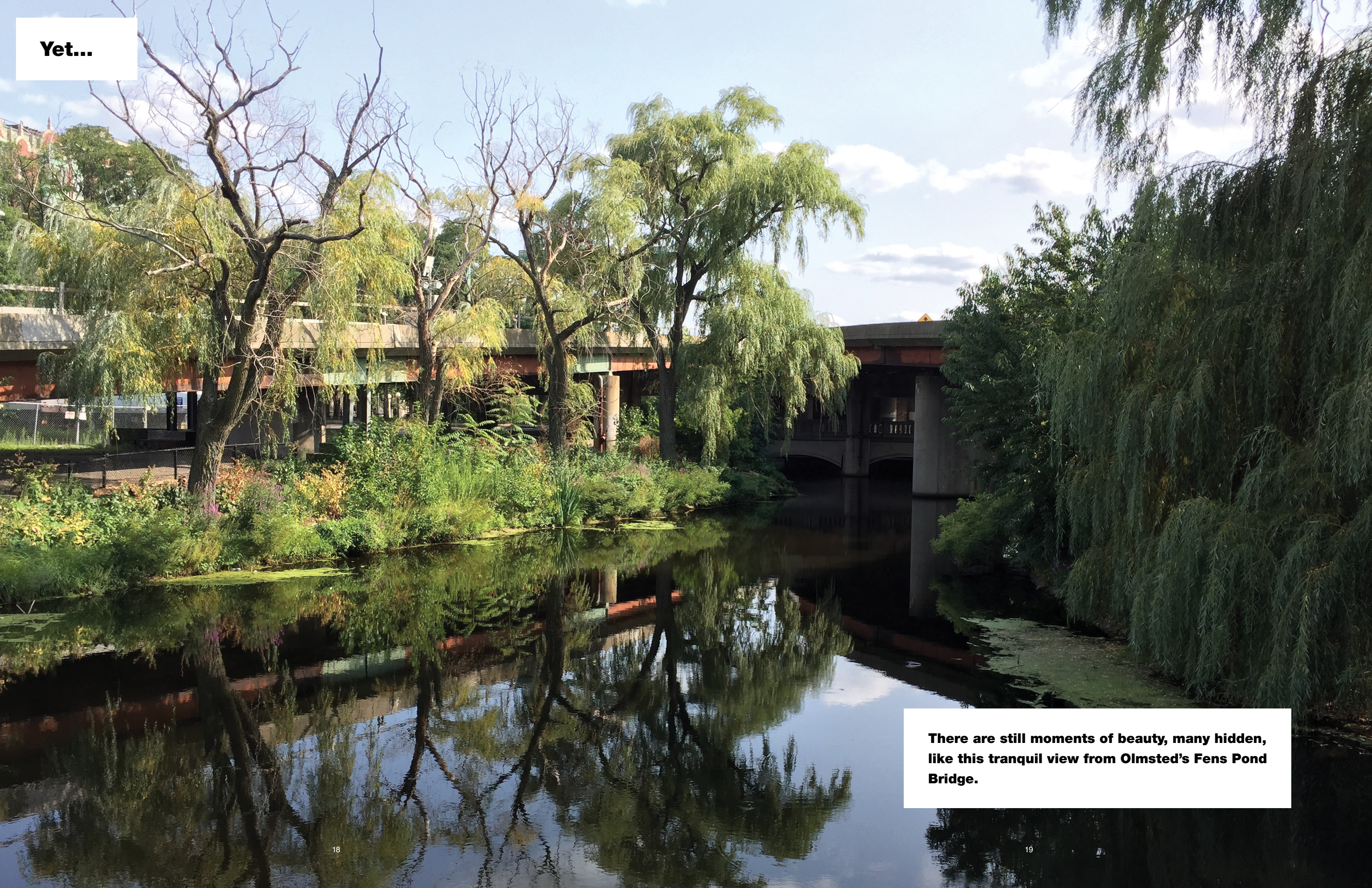


broken railing

The Problem

Much of the Charlesgate is dull and uninviting, with no places to sit, play, or stroll...

Yet...



There are still moments of beauty, many hidden, like this tranquil view from Olmsted's Fens Pond Bridge.

Yet...



To the left, a view of the Muddy River and the Somerset evoke the era of Olmsted.

To the right, historic relics are found throughout. A granite pier and iron railing by Olmsted sits next to a decorative concrete balustrade by Shurcliff.

Below, the Fens Pond Bridge, originally spanning the confluence of the Muddy River and the Charles, is buried in a grassy mound.



Today, there is new hope for the Charlesgate!

In 2017, a group of concerned residents organized and called themselves the Charlesgate Alliance. They were joined by the leadership of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, to develop a community-led vision to bring back the Charlesgate.

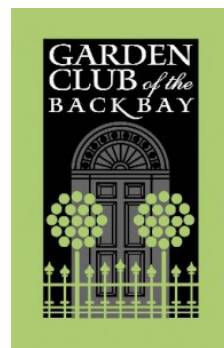
Meet (some of) the Charlesgate Alliance!



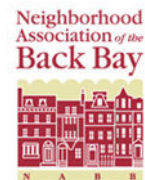
Over the course of 2017 - 2018, the Charlesgate Alliance formed partnerships with local stakeholders including the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), which is the custodian of the Charlesgate, garnered the support of the Solomon Foundation, and hired the design firm, Landing Studio, to help hold a series of public events and meetings and develop the vision.



LANDING STUDIO



Kenmore Association, Inc.



Kenmore Residents' Group



2017-2018 Charlesgate Outreach & Events

- April 29** Muddy River Cleanup event
- Sept 16** Walk Around - Public event
- Oct 4** Charlesgate Alliance Leadership meeting
- Oct 5** DCR meeting
- Oct 10** Public Meeting 1 - Charlesgate Talk About
- Oct 23** Charles River Watershed Association meeting
- Oct 30** Maintenance and Management Oversight Committee meeting
- Nov 2** Charlesgate Alliance Leadership meeting
- Nov 17** Boston Water and Sewer Commission meeting
- Dec 4** Public Meeting 2 - Charlesgate Talk About
- Jan 8** Charlesgate Alliance Leadership meeting
- Jan 28** Silent Auction - Fundraising event
- Feb 5** Charlesgate Alliance Leadership meeting
- March 5** DCR meeting
- March 5** Charlesgate Alliance Leadership meeting
- March 14** MassDOT Highway Commissioner meeting
- April 9** Public Meeting 3 - Talk About
- April 28** Muddy River Cleanup event
- April 28** Charlesgate in Bloom - Fundraising event
- May 4** State Legislators Brownsberger, Rushing, Livingstone meeting
- May 15** DCR meeting
- June 9** Public Meeting 4 - Walk Around and Talk About
- June 25** Charlesgate Alliance Leadership meeting
- July 5** Charlesgate Chairs commences
- July 23** Charlesgate Alliance Leadership meeting
- Aug 29** Charlesgate Alliance Leadership meeting
- Sept 22** Autumn Equinox event ... and more! ...

Public Meeting 1: Oct 10, 2017

Group visioning

68 attendees



Public Meeting 2: Dec 4, 2017

Design & program workshops - round 1

65 attendees



Public Meeting 3: April 9, 2018

Design & program workshops - round 2

50 attendees



Public Meeting 4: June 9, 2018

Site tours & review concept design

25 attendees



Through the public meetings and workshops, four major principles emerged:

1- Improve Muddy River water quality and habitat

- manage storm water with landscape systems
- provide habitat-rich landscape design

2- Reconnect Boston's 3 park systems and neighborhoods across the Charlesgate

- add bike accommodations
- safe pedestrian connections
- open up views

3- Celebrate the Charlesgate's history

- incorporate significant built elements and flora
- develop a language that complements Charlesgate's design legacy

4- Activate the site with new uses

- provide amenity spaces that invite a variety of uses
- dog park!
- flexibility



The Community's Vision

The four principles of water quality, connectivity, history, and activity evolved into this multi-layered concept plan:

The Allee

The New Grove

The Old Grove

The Patio

The Circles

The Bowl & Bridge

North Field

South Field

THE GATE HOUSE

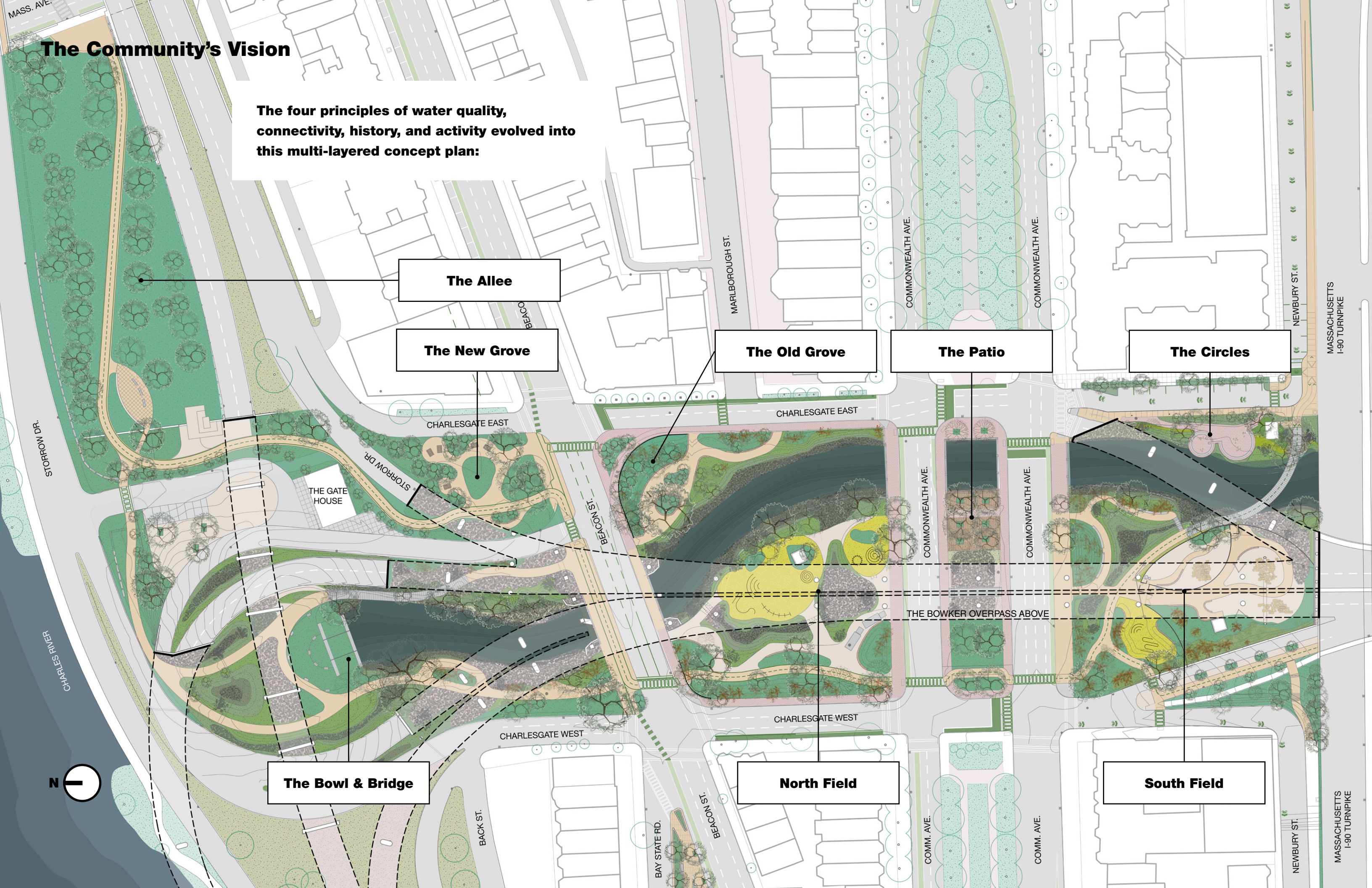
CHARLESGATE EAST

CHARLESGATE EAST

THE BOWKER OVERPASS ABOVE

CHARLESGATE WEST

CHARLESGATE WEST



Remember the **critical link**? The vision will restore the connections in Boston's Park System: linking the Emerald Necklace to the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, to the Esplanade!

The Esplanade →

← The Commonwealth Avenue Mall

Back Bay

North of
Beacon

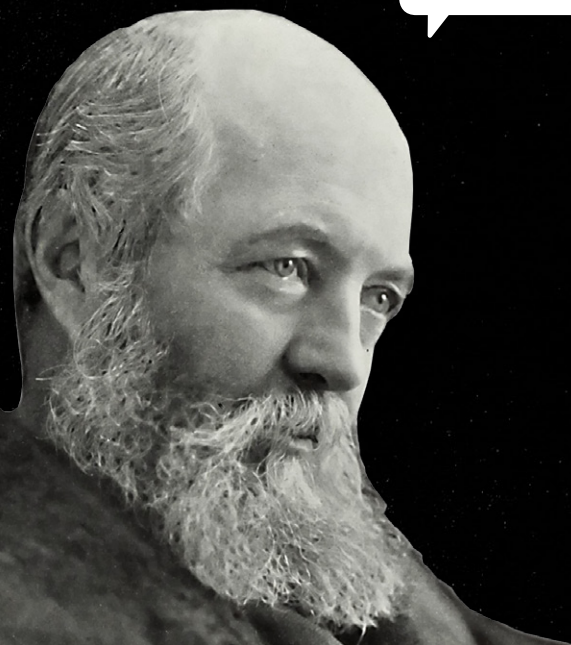
South of
Beacon

The Emerald Necklace

Nice!

Kenmore

Realizing the vision all at once would take an estimated \$13 million. So while MassDOT undertakes a bridge repair study North of Beacon, this initiative will focus on the area **South of Beacon** that is most central to the Back Bay and Kenmore neighborhoods.



South of Beacon

The Old Grove

A wonderful, quiet seating area, shaded by a grove of mature black locust trees that date back to Olmsted's Beacon Street Entrance.

The North Field

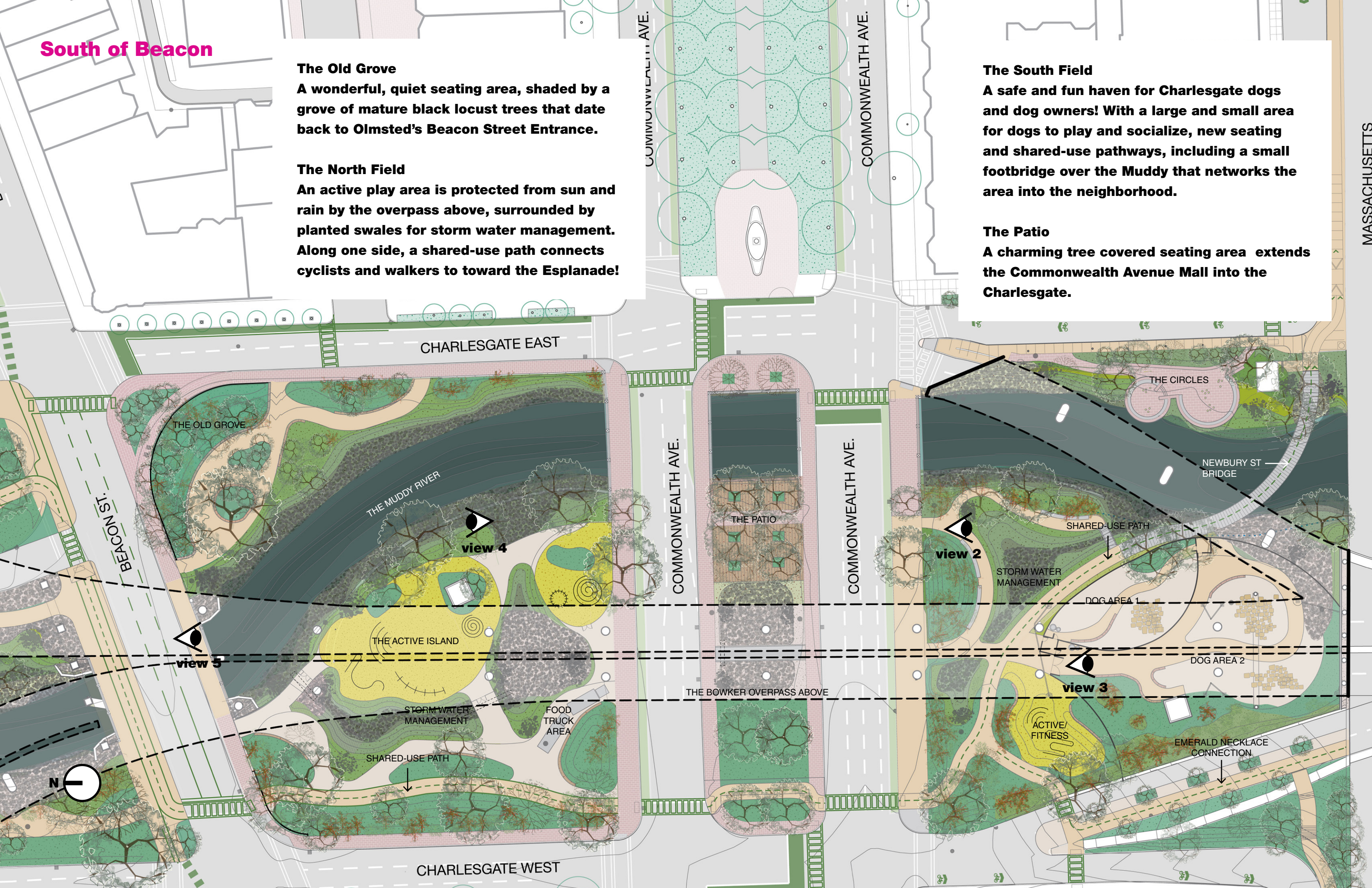
An active play area is protected from sun and rain by the overpass above, surrounded by planted swales for storm water management. Along one side, a shared-use path connects cyclists and walkers to toward the Esplanade!

The South Field

A safe and fun haven for Charlesgate dogs and dog owners! With a large and small area for dogs to play and socialize, new seating and shared-use pathways, including a small footbridge over the Muddy that networks the area into the neighborhood.

The Patio

A charming tree covered seating area extends the Commonwealth Avenue Mall into the Charlesgate.

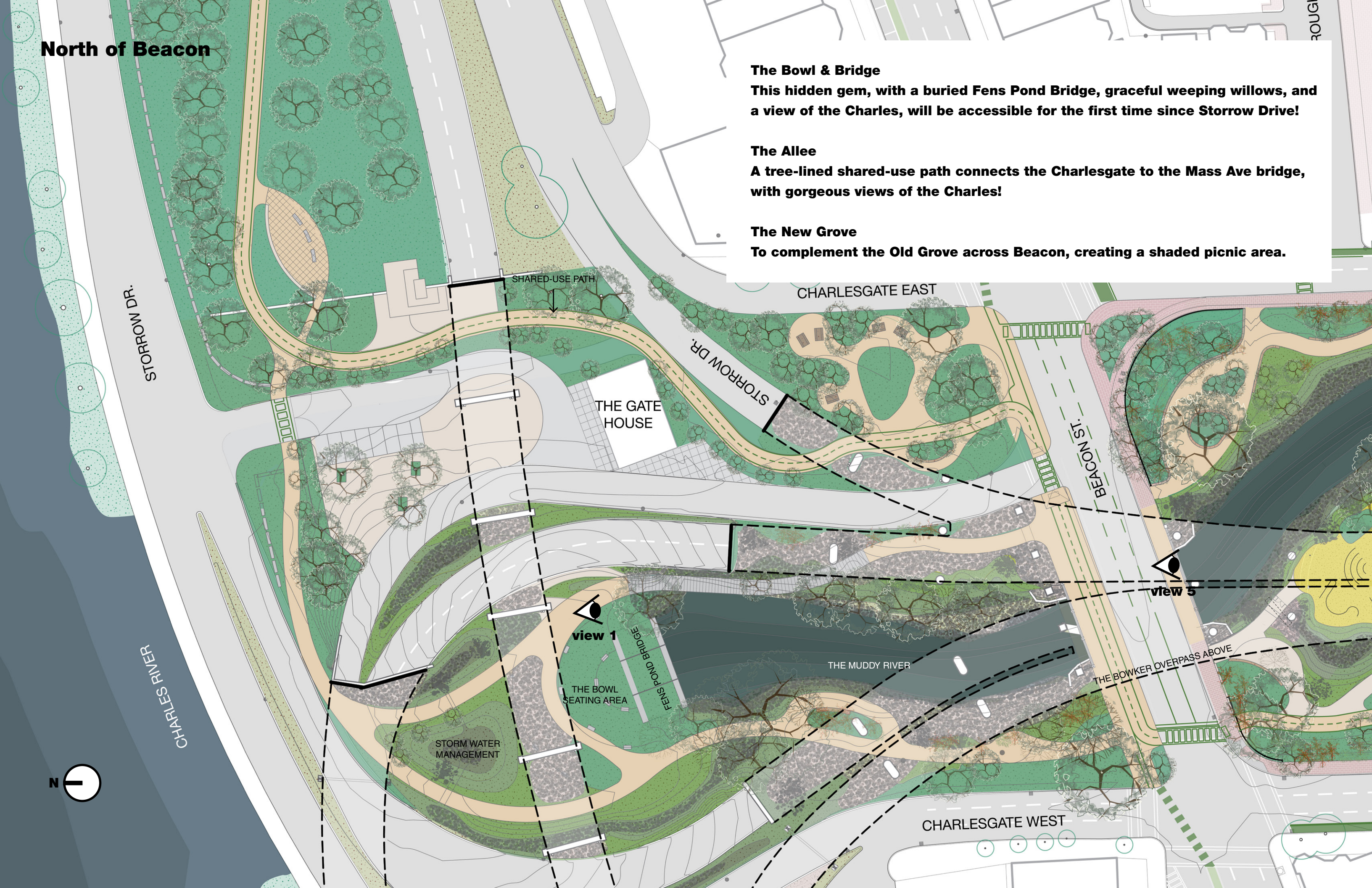


North of Beacon

The Bowl & Bridge
This hidden gem, with a buried Fens Pond Bridge, graceful weeping willows, and a view of the Charles, will be accessible for the first time since Storrow Drive!

The Allee
A tree-lined shared-use path connects the Charlesgate to the Mass Ave bridge, with gorgeous views of the Charles!

The New Grove
To complement the Old Grove across Beacon, creating a shaded picnic area.



STORROW DR.

THE GATE HOUSE

CHARLES GATE EAST

STORROW DR.

BEACON ST.

view 5

view 1

THE BOWL SEATING AREA

FENS POND BRIDGE

STORM WATER MANAGEMENT

THE MUDDY RIVER

THE BOWKER OVERPASS ABOVE

CHARLES GATE WEST

CHARLES RIVER



The Bowl & Bridge



view 1

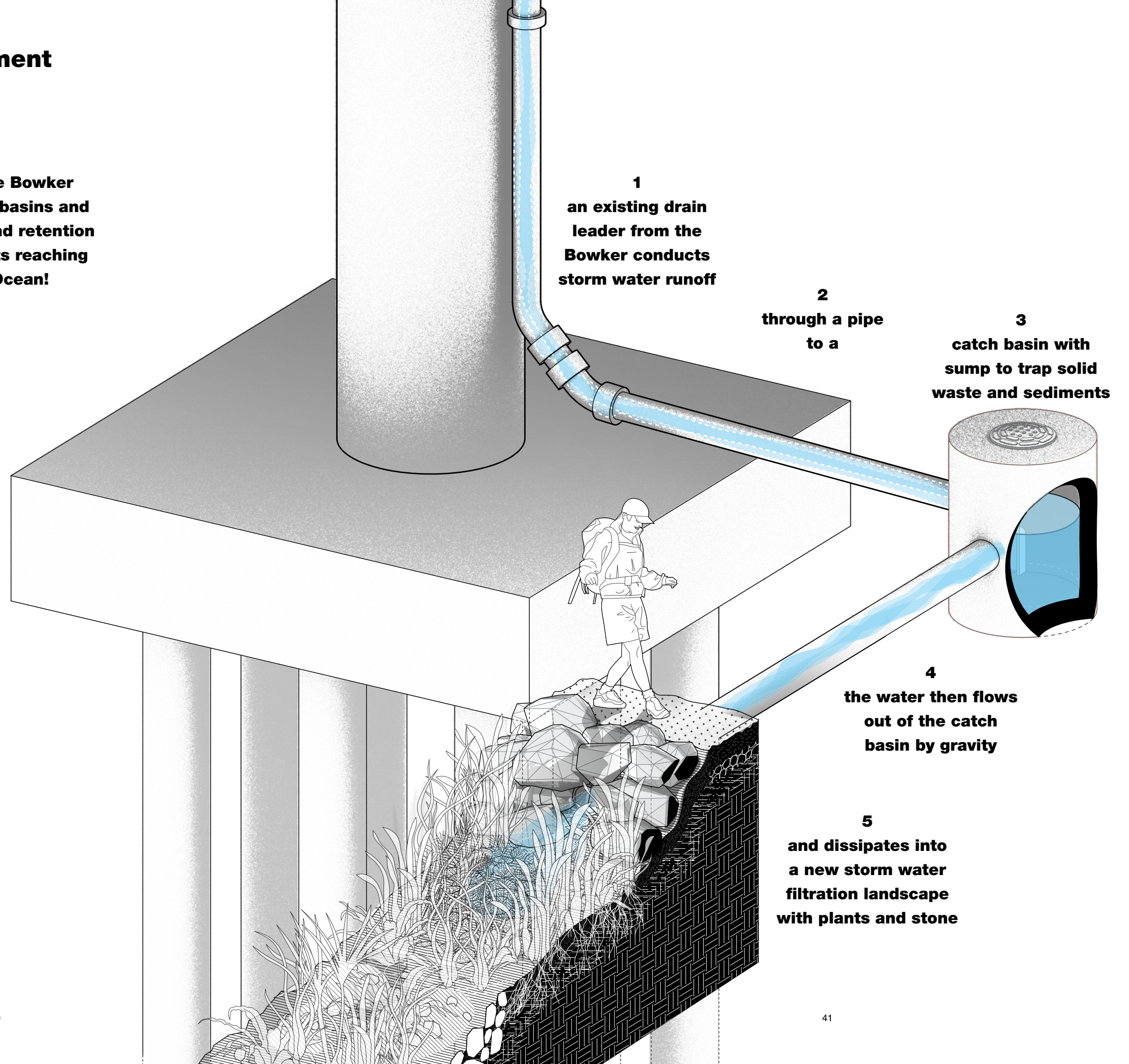


The Bowl & Bridge is a reclaimed landscape: formerly at the junction between the Muddy and the Charles, this area will support amphitheater-like seating, storm water filtration landscapes, and a new boardwalk that re-links the space back to Beacon Street.

Green Storm Water Management

(occurs throughout)

All of the storm water runoff from the Bowker Overpass will be pretreated in catch basins and filtered through planted bioswales and retention areas, thereby reducing the pollutants reaching the Muddy River and eventually the Ocean!



South Field



view 2

The storm water management landscape extends the wetland planting palette of the Muddy River into the South Field. To the right, dogs happily play in the dog park. In the distance, the Newbury Street footbridge forms a critical link, making the area less fragmented and more accessible.



The Dog Park!



view 3

Charlesgate dogs can choose between a larger and smaller play zone, with benches, water, agility features, and a maintenance shed. Dogs climb on mini-mountains made of re-purposed granite. A new sound wall with a vibrant mural lessens the noise from the Turnpike.





A 'living shoreline' will reinvigorate the Muddy River banks with plants and animal habitat, and help contribute to improved water quality by preventing runoff and erosion.



Above: The paved Muddy River shoreline today

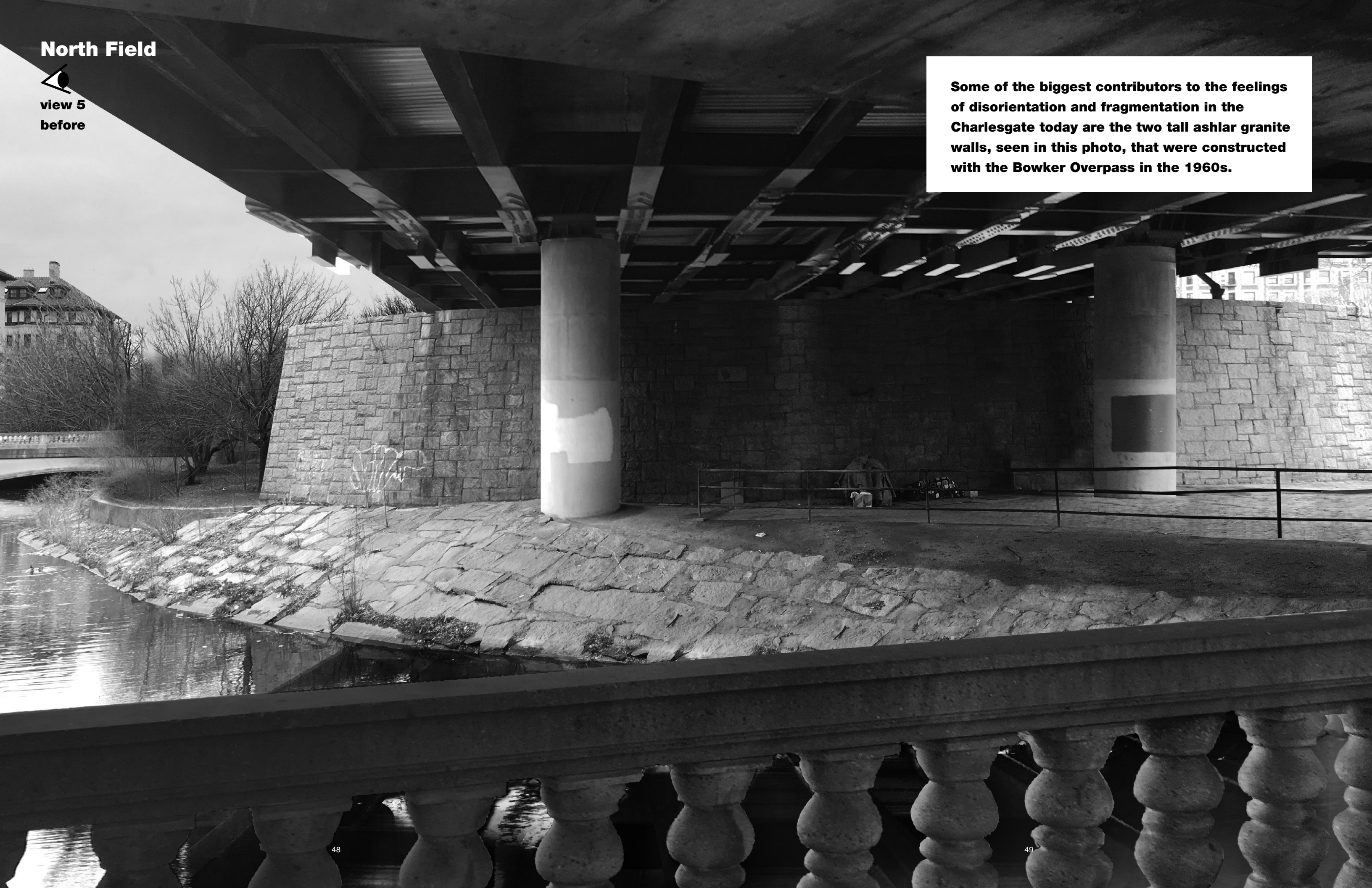


North Field



**view 5
before**

Some of the biggest contributors to the feelings of disorientation and fragmentation in the Charlesgate today are the two tall ashlar granite walls, seen in this photo, that were constructed with the Bowker Overpass in the 1960s.



North Field

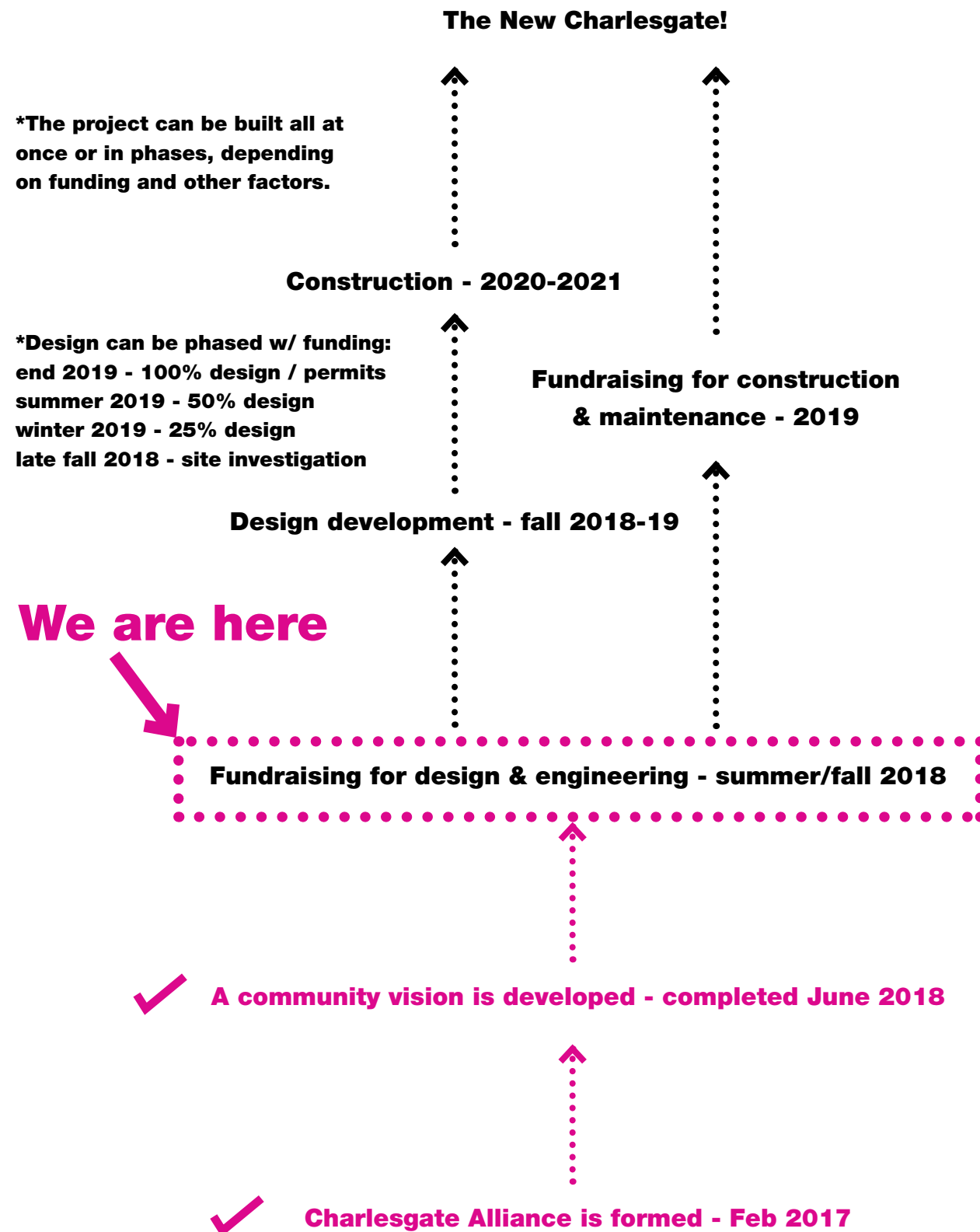


view 5
after

Dismantling those walls will tie together the real expanse of the Charlesgate for the first time since the Bowker! Looking from the Beacon Street bridge, an active zone enlivens the North Field under the Bowker, with a living shoreline visible in the foreground.



What it will take to realize the vision - next steps



The Charlesgate Alliance's immediate goal is to raise **\$650,000** to develop a shovel-ready design for the area **South of Beacon.**

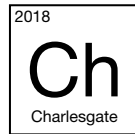
***Shovel-ready means that the project is ready for construction, which makes it a stronger candidate for certain types of construction phase funding. Shovel ready means that all of the construction drawings, specifications, modeling and/or calculations, and permit approvals required by the state and local authorities are complete and in hand.**

The \$650,000 would be used to develop the vision into a buildable project, which includes:

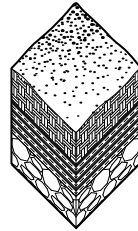
- Site investigation, including: site survey (building on information already provided by DCR and DOT), soil testing, environmental review, geotechnical testing**
- Design and engineering development: site layout, storm water management, hydraulic modeling and living shoreline design, traffic engineering for ped and bike facilities, structural engineering for footbridge and other structures, electrical engineering, lighting design, site furniture and amenity design and specification**
- Permitting: local and state**

Suggested levels of giving

Help us reach our goal of raising \$650,000 by becoming a contributing member of the Charlesgate Alliance! All contributing members will be recognized on charlesgatealliance.org and more, contact us at charlesgatealliance@gmail.com for more information.



Elemental Member
Contributions up to \$999



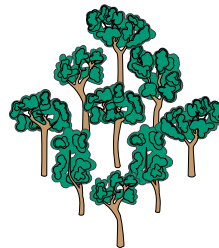
Bedrock Member
Contributions \$1,000 to \$4,999



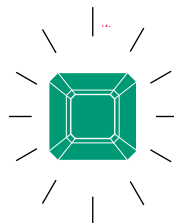
River Member
Contributions \$5,000 to \$9,999



Garden Member
Contributions \$10,000 to \$14,999



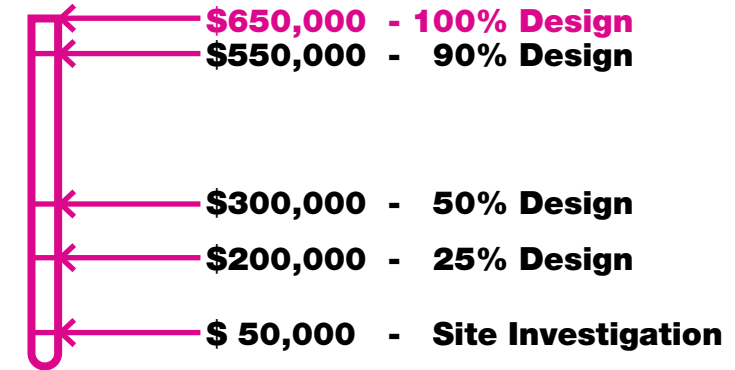
Grove Member
Contributions \$15,000 to \$49,999



Emerald Member
Contributions of \$50K or more

Your contribution will make a difference

With your support, we can start the design process even before the full \$650,000 has been achieved:



Ways to give

There are several ways to donate to the Charlesgate vision. All donations are tax-deductible.

- 1- **Online:**
Visit charlesgatealliance.org and click on 'Donate'
- 2- **Write a check to the Emerald Necklace Conservancy (our fiscal sponsor) with the memo: Charlesgate Alliance**
Mail to:
The Emerald Necklace Conservancy
Re: Charlesgate Alliance Capital Campaign
125 The Fenway
Boston, MA 02115
- 3- **Donate through your company. Find out more by contacting charlesgatealliance@gmail.com**
- 4- **Get involved! Join us if you would like to participate or take a leadership role in the Charlesgate Alliance!**
Visit charlesgatealliance.org/join-us-2/ for more information.



What else we're up to

The Charlesgate Alliance is currently taking several courses of action to achieve the vision, including:

-Develop public agency partnerships: with the DCR and MassDOT (DCR has care, custody, and control of the land, and MassDOT which operates the Bowker Overpass above, Storrow Drive and the Mass Pike)

-Public funding: working with state legislators Brownsberger, Rushing, and Livingstone

-Private fundraising: with two successful events in 2018 and more in the works

-Grants: awarded a Fenway Park Demonstration Project grant for tree pruning in 2018, and pursuing other grant opportunities

-Community building: Charlesgate Chairs, the Autumn Equinox at Charlesgate, and other ideas in the works

Stay tuned!

Thank you!



Book design and Charlesgate concept design:
LANDING STUDIO
www.landing-studio.com